

The Rosary: A Breath of Fresh Prayer
By Cassandra Poppe

Today you will do it. You will get through it. You will pray the Rosary! “Queen of the Holy Rosary, you have deigned to come to Fatima to reveal to the three shepherd children the treasures of grace hidden in the Rosary

Suddenly, the world intrudes. You start to compile your grocery list instead of meditating. Your husband can’t find his socks. Finally, when your toddler bumps is head and needs a kiss, you decide you will finish praying later. But later comes and goes, and suddenly it is 11:30pm and you have not finished the Rosary. Those hidden treasures of grace will have to wait for another time.

Dry spells, distractions, stagnant growth or interruptions can all frustrate our efforts to pray. We are busy mothers and whether we pray 5 or 15 or even 20 Mysteries in a day, the Rosary can take up a sizeable chunk of time! The last thing we need is a “good” reason to skip the Rosary!

If you are a struggling Rosary prayer, read on because I am going to present to you a slightly different way to pray. You will not only get through 15 Mysteries in a day, but you will also spend an entire day, walking and talking with Our Lady and growing in the graces and virtues we all so desperately need to get to Heaven.

Simply put, I will show you how to breathe the Rosary – to inhale the Mystery and exhale the grace.

St. Louis de Montfort, in his book *The Secret of the Rosary*, seemed to have homeschooling mothers in mind when he said:

I advise you to divide up your Rosary into three parts and to say each group of mysteries (five decades) at a different time of day. This is much better than saying the whole 15 decades all at once.

If you cannot find the time to say a third part of the Rosary all at one time, say it gradually, a decade here and there. I am sure you can manage this; so that, in spite of your work and all the calls upon your time, you will have said the whole Rosary before going to bed.”

Why break the Rosary up? Usually, no matter how well we try to plan our prayer time, things tend to pop up and pull us away from Our Lady. If we feel pressed to finish quickly, it gets harder to concentrate. If we are lucky enough to finish the Rosary at all, we frequently feel as though we didn’t really pray at all. This kind of prayer does not honor Our Lady and it certainly does nothing to convert our

hearts or strengthen our souls.

When we breathe the Rosary, however, we spend the entire day immersed within the Mysteries, talking to Mary and actively working on mastering the virtues we are called to perfect.

How? St. Louis de Montfort assigned various graces and virtues to each Mystery and offers a little prayer asking for each treasure before beginning each decade. Inspired by his presentation of the Mysteries and the gifts we should ask for, I began to breathe the Rosary.

At 6:00am, begin the Rosary. When you announce the Annunciation, also ask, through the Mystery, for a profound humility. As you pray the Our Father and Hail Marys, create a vivid picture of the Annunciation in your mind. Place yourself within the scene as Mary's student, ready to learn whatever it is she wants to teach you. For this decade, you will learn humility. Ponder the many ways humility is expressed in this Mystery and ask Mary to help you find ways of expressing this humility as well.

After the Glory Be, stop and then go about your usual activities. For the next hour you will exhale the grace you just prayed for. Humility. In every interaction you have with others, whether it be your children, your husband, the garbage man or just yourself. Humility.

The Annunciation is a joyful moment, a challenge, and a heroic chance to say "Yes!" to whatever it is God is calling us to do at any moment. Talk to Mary. She will begin to show you pieces of the Annunciation that mirror your own situations during this hour in the most amazing ways. Live humbly from 6 to 7:00am. That is all.

So what happens at 7:00? If you are in the middle of changing a diaper or chasing the dog, don't panic. Live humbly through the interruption and know that God is asking something else of you at the moment and you will return to your prayer in a minute. But right around 7:00am, return to your room or prayer space for a moment. Kneel down and review your hour. Where were you blessed with humility? Where did you fall? This is a mini examination of conscience for you. Make the Sign of the Cross and pray, the Fatima Prayer:

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins and save us from the fires of Hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy."
Then pray, "Grace of the mystery of the Incarnation, come down into my soul and make it truly humble."

Have about 5 seconds of silence and then inhale the next Mystery: the Visitation,

for perfect charity towards your neighbor.

The beauty of this method, for me, is that I can spend the whole day with Our Lady. I spend from 6 to 6:05 inhaling the Annunciation. From 6:05 to 7:00 I am exhaling the grace, trying to live in the example of humility Mary is showing me.

From 7 to 7:05 I make myself account for my failings, ask Our Lord for forgiveness and then inhale the Visitation. From 7:05 to 8:00am I exhale, in my own imperfect way, charity towards my neighbors: my husband, my children, the person who just pulled out in front of me on the highway, and to myself. I relive the Visitation during that hour and try my hand at being charitable. Mary reminds me that the greatest act of charity is to bring Christ to others, just as she brought Christ to Elizabeth. At 8:00 I take another moment to recall the past hour. How did I do? Can I gather strength in my successes, thanking Our Lady for showing me how to be charitable? Can I find my failings and pray for guidance next time I am tempted to be uncharitable?

Obviously I cannot go through all of the Mysteries here, but I have given you your first breaths to get you started. Breathing the Rosary will help you overcome the many stumbling blocks you may come across in your prayer life. When you pray in smaller breaths, it is easier to concentrate on your prayer and distractions do not have a chance to take over. Your children will learn that when you go to pray each hour, it only takes about three minutes instead of twenty or more, and they are less likely to interrupt you. Through the process of exhaling, you ward off dry spells due to boredom, and you will enjoy strengthening your soul with the challenges each day brings. And as you grow more comfortable with this method, teach it to your children as well. That way, your entire household can enjoy this breath of fresh prayer!

The following is a list of the 15 Mysteries and their “treasures” as St. Louis suggests. Use this list as a basic framework for your day.

Annunciation - Humility

Visitation – charity towards our neighbor

Nativity – detachment from material things, love of poverty and love of the poor

Presentation - the gift of wisdom and purity of heart and body

Finding in the Temple – conversion and amendment of our lives, and to convert

all sinners, heretics, schismatics and idolaters

Agony in the Garden – true contrition and perfect obedience

Scourging - spirit of mortification

Crowning with thorns - a great contempt of the world

Carrying Thy cross - patience in carrying our cross

Crucifixion – a horror of sin, a love of the Cross and the grace of a holy death for ourselves and for those who are now dying

Resurrection - faith.

Ascension - hope and a longing for Heaven

Pentecost - to know, love, practice and then spread Thy truth

The Immaculate Conception and Mary's Assumption – devotion to Mary

Coronation - perseverance and an increase in virtue